

Do Not Despair Of Allaah's Mercy

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Source: Al-Fataawaa (1/251-253)

[Question]: I am a young man, nineteen years of age, and have involved myself in a great deal of sin. Even to the extent that I do not pray most of my Prayers in the mosque, and I have never completely fasted the month of Ramadaan in my entire life. Besides these, I have committed other sins as well. I have vowed to repent many times before, however, after doing so I lapse back into these same sins. The youths of my area are just as bad, as are the friends that I associate with. And Allaah knows that I have transgressed against myself and that whenever I repent, I return back to the same sins. I hope that you may direct me to a path that will bring me closer to my Lord and distance me from these evil actions of mine.

[Answer]: Allaah - the Might and Majestic - says:

"Say O My Slaves who have transgressed against their own souls! Do not despair of Allah's mercy. Indeed Allaah forgives all sins. Truly He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." [Soorah az-Zumar 39:53].

There is a consensus from the Scholars that this noble aayah (verse) was revealed for the taa'ibeen (those who repent). So whoever sincerely repents from his sins, then Allaah will forgive him all his sins, as occurs in the saying of Allaah - the Most Perfect:

"O you who Believe! Turn to Allaah in sincere repentance. Perhaps your Lord may remove from you your sins and admit you into Paradise beneath which rivers flow." [Soorah at-Tahreem 66:8].

So in this aayah (verse), Allaah has made the removal of sins and entry into Paradise dependant upon sincere repentance.

And sincere repentance is conditional upon:

- [i] abandoning the sin and keeping away from it,
- [ii] having regret and remorse for committing the sin,
- [iii] truly intending not to commit the sin again,
- [iv] remembering the greatness of Allaah and hoping for His reward, whilst fearing His punishment.

Another condition for sincere repentance is that if due to transgression, the wealth or property of someone has been stolen or usurped, then it must be returned or forgiveness must be sought from the one whose wealth, blood or honour has been taken.

However, if the honour of a person has been violated and the situation is such that it is not possible to seek that persons forgiveness, then plenty of du'aa (supplication) should be made for his welfare and he should be spoken good of in those places where he had previously been backbitten, since good deeds wipe away bad ones. Allaah - the Most Perfect - said:

"Turn you all in repentance to Allaah, O Believers, in order that you may be successful." [Soorah an-Noor 24:31].

So in this aayah (verse) Allaah the Mighty and Majestic - linked success with tawbah (repentance) and points to the fact that the repentant person will reach success and happiness, and if such a person were to follow up this repentance with emaan (faith) and doing righteous actions, then Allaah would efface his evil actions and change them to good actions, as Allaah the Most Perfect - said after mentioning the sins of Shirk (directing worship that is due only for Allaah to other than Allaah), taking a life without just cause and fornication and adultery-:

"And whoever does this, will receive the punishment, the torment will be doubled for him on the Day of Judgement and he will live therein in disgrace. Except for those who repent, have emaan (faith) and do righteous actions. For them Allaah will change their evil deeds into good ones, and Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

[Soorah al-Furqaan 25:68-70]

And from the causes of tawbah (repentance) are humility and submissiveness to Allaah - the Most Perfect - and asking Allaah for guidance and ability, and that acceptance of one's repentance is considered as a Favour from Allaah, as Allaah - the Most Perfect - said:

'Call upon Me and I will respond to your supplication.'

[Soorah Ghaafir 40:60]

And He - the Mighty and Majestic - said:

"And when My servant asks you concerning Me, say to them that I am indeed near, And I respond to the supplication of the one who supplicates to Me." [Soorah al-Baqarah 2:186].

Also, from the causes of tawbah is choosing good companionship and friendship and following them in righteous conduct, whilst staying clear of bad companionship. It is authentically related from Allah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam that he said:

"A person is upon the way of life of his friend,
so let one of you look to whom he keeps as a friend." ¹

And the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam also said:

"The example of a good companion and a bad companion is like that of a seller of musk, and the one who blows the blacksmith's bellows. As for the seller of musk, then either he will grant you some, or at the very least you enjoy a pleasant smell from him. As for the one, who blows the blacksmith's bellows, then either he will burn your clothes or you will get an offensive smell from him." ²

¹ Hasan: Related by Abu Dawood (no.4812) and others, from Abu Hurayrah radiyallaahu 'anhu. Imaam an-Nawawee authenticated it in Riyaadus-Saaliheen (no.174).

² Related by al-Bukhaaree (4/323) and Muslim (no.2628), from Abu Moosaa al-Asharee radiyallaahu 'anhu.